

EDITOR'S PAGE



Building Modern Medical Societies Through *Watching* and *Listening*



Valentin Fuster, MD, PhD

I believe that positive growth can only evolve from active watching and listening. These are oft-forgotten skills, but ones that are necessary for collective or personal growth. In this issue of the *Journal*, we celebrate the recent successes of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC), which has solidified its structural and functional modern presence—mainly through watching and listening to the needs of its constituents. The Immediate ESC Past President Panos Vardas, MD, PhD, and current ESC President Fausto J. Pinto, MD, PhD, coauthored the Guest Editors' Page in this issue (1).

I have personally been involved with the ESC for more than 40 years, attending some of the very early congresses, which became more formalized under Paul G. Hugenholtz, MD, who served as president from 1984 to 1988 (2). Today, approximately 50,000 cardiology professionals attend the annual ESC Congress. Also, by listening to his younger members, Hugenholtz served to connect younger cardiologists across Europe, even before the digital age. These efforts became solidified by the erection of the European Heart House in Sophia Antipolis, France, in 1993, under the presidency of Michel Bertrand, MD, which met the members' needs for an educational and training center as well as the practical needs of unifying ESC staff and leadership in 1 location. Previously, the ESC was headquartered in Nyon, Switzerland, which lies midway between Lausanne and Geneva, in a 300-m² apartment. The Society had largely outgrown these humble roots by the late 1980s, and the leadership raised funds to build this new headquarters in France to better serve its staff and members.

In the first section of their Guest Editors' Page, Dr. Vardas speaks to the role of the ESC President in the

structural formation of the institution—as an agent of change. He listened to the need to modernize the Society's educational offerings and the need to unify various ESC factions, including guideline development. He also responded to the changing European economic and regulatory environments by expanding the Society's physical presence to Brussels through the development of the European Heart Agency initiative. In the second section, Dr. Pinto focuses on how the Society will functionally execute its strategic goals, which were collaboratively created, including education and guidelines as well as research and lobbying. Importantly, Dr. Pinto recognizes that membership is the “backbone of the Society” and that listening to the senior members as well as the younger members—who are the future—will be the only pathway toward continued success.

To this point, the ESC has achieved 1 model of structural, functional, and operational success. Cardiovascular and medical societies cannot succeed in isolation. Our associations and societies will meet with greatest achievement when they work collaboratively toward common goals. We seek to treat the same cardiovascular diseases despite the geographical borders that separate us. We should not be at odds or in competition with each other. We need to listen to each other and work with each other if we have any chance of overcoming the challenges that cardiovascular disease poses us. As physician servants, it is our duty to ensure that we make our successes global.

REFERENCES

1. Vardas PE, Pinto FJ. A look back, a look forward: messages from the past and future of the European Society of Cardiology. *J Am Coll Cardiol* 2015;65:745-8.
2. European Society of Cardiology. A brief history of the ESC. Available at: <http://www.escardio.org/about/who/Pages/history.aspx>. Accessed January 4, 2015.